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<7 BULGARIA:

**Mladenov Faces First Test**

*The demonstration planned for Saturday by dissident groups will provide the first measure of popular determination to press for liberalization and of the new party leader's willingness to accommodate it.* 

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Although hailing the leadership change as a positive first step, dissidents remain skeptical of Mladenov's promises of moves toward democracy and pluralism. Dissidents already are calling for political pluralism and have announced plans for another mass march on Saturday. Ecoglasnost, the independent ecological group that recently spearheaded Bulgaria's largest demonstration ever, today will ask the Supreme Court to permit its registration as a legal group. 

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**Comment:** Bulgarian dissident groups remain small but clearly intend to test Mladenov's promises of greater freedom. The size of the demonstration planned for Saturday may indicate whether the dissident movement has the strength to challenge the regime. Sofia is in a difficult position—it will be hard to disrupt the demonstration only days after the new General Secretary promised openness and dialogue with the people. 

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Another test of the regime's commitment to pluralism will come later this month when it must decide on the legalization of Ecoglasnost and how to handle applications from other human rights groups seeking legal status. 

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